

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2793

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 21729

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJ: BANGKOK CELEBRATES OCTOBER 14

SUMMARY: BANGKOK HAD A SEDATE CELEBRATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER 14, 1973, RIOTS WHICH TOPPLED THE THANOM GOVERNMENT. CROWDS WERE MIDLY ENTHUSIASTIC WITH REPRESENTATION FROM VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE. POLICE WERE ON HAND TO MAINTAIN ORDER, BUT IN SMALL NUMBERS AND IN THE BACKGROUND. SOME LEFT WING ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA WAS ON DISPLAY. OVERALL, THE RALLY WAS A SUCCESS FOR THE NSCT AND ITS SUPPORTERS.

1. BANGKOK WOUND UP ITS FOUR DAY CELEBRATION OF THE OCTOBER 1973, RIOTS WHICH TOPPLED THE GOVERNMENT OF FIELD MARSHALL THANOM KITTIKHACHON AND PAVED THE WAY FOR THE PRESENT PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) WAS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CELEBRATIONS, BUT OTHER STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS THE RTG ALSO PARTICIPATED.

2. THE CELEBRATIONS GOT OFF TO A SLOW START ON OCTOBER 11 AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY. BY OCTOBER 13, HOWEVER, WHEN PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT AND SEVERAL OTHER OFFICIALS OPENED AN EXHIBITION AT THAMMASAT, THE CROWDS SLOWLY INCREASED. THE OCTOBER 14 PARADE FROM THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY TO THE DEMOCRACY MONUMENT AND THE LAYING OF THE CORNER-  
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STONE OF A MONUMENT TO THOSE WHO DIED IN THE 1973 RIOTS

CLIMAXED THE CELEBRATIONS. STUDENT LEADERS HAD MADE A BELATED ATTEMPT LAST WEEK TO INVITE THE KING TO LAY THE CORNERSTONE, BUT BECAUSE OF THE LATENESS OF THE REQUEST AND POSSIBLY THE KING'S INCREASING DISENCHANTMENT WITH STUDENT ACTIVISTS, THE SUPREME PATRIARCH OF THAILAND'S BUDDHISTS, PHRA ARIYAWONGSAKHATAYAN, PERFORMED THE CEREMONY INSTEAD.

3. THE PARADE INCLUDED ABOUT 3,000 MARCHERS WITH ANOTHER 5,000 TO 6,000 BYSTANDERS. THE MARCHERS MADE AN ATTEMPT AT SOLEMNITY, BUT MOST, ESPECIALLY THE STUDENTS, SEEMED TO BE HAVING A GOOD TIME. SCORES OF HAWKERS AND FOOD VENDORS DID A BRISK BUSINESS, ADDING TO THE CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE. THE MAJORITY OF THE MARCHERS AND MUCH OF THE CROWD APPEARED TO BE STUDENTS. THERE WAS A FAIR MIXTURE OF LABORERS, LOWER LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS, AND FARMERS AMONG THE MARCHERS, AND THE CROWD SEEMED TO BE A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF BANGKOK SOCIETY. TWO PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY MARCHED WITH A GROUP OF LABORERS. NO RTG OFFICIALS PARTICIPATED IN THE MARCH ITSELF.

4. SEVERAL HIGH RANKING POLICE OFFICERS WERE ON HAND, INCLUDING METROPOLITAN POLICE CHIEF, POLICE LT. GENERAL NARONG MAHANON. EXCEPT FOR A FEW POLICE ENGAGED IN CROWD CONTROL AND DIRECTING TRAFFIC, THE SMALL CONTINGENT OF POLICE AND MILITARY POLICE STAYED IN THE BACKGROUND. VOCATIONAL STUDENTS WEARING SPECIAL ARMBANDS HANDLED MOST OF THE CROWD CONTROL AND BOY SCOUTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE TRAFFIC DIRECTION.

5. THE NSCT HAD SET UP A NUMBER OF DISPLAYS ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE, SOME OF THEM CRUDELY ANTI-AMERICAN. A FEW SWIPES WERE ALSO TAKEN AT THE SOVIET UNION IN THE DISPLAYS. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, DISPLAYS STUCK TO DENOUNCING AND SATIRIZING THE THANOM-PRAPHAT GOVERNMENT WHICH FELL IN 1973, AS WELL AS SEVERAL PREVIOUS MILITARY GOVERNMENTS. THERE WAS ALSO A GOOD DEAL OF LEFT WING PRINTED MATERIAL FOR SALE, MOST OF IT COMMUNIST-ORIENTED, WITH A HEAVY PEKING BIAS. THE COMMUNIST MATERIAL DID NOT APPEAR TO BE SELLING WELL, BUT LEFT WING MATTER CONCERNING THE OCTOBER, 1973, RIOTING WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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FAIRLY POPULAR.

6. KRIANGKOMON LAOHAPAIROT, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NSCT, SPOKE SEVERAL TIMES TO THE CROWD AND MARCHERS. THE TONE OF HIS SPEECHES, AND THOSE OF OTHERS, WAS RATHER MILD AND NATIONALISTIC IN TONE. THE SPEAKERS EULOGIZED THOSE WHO DIED IN THE 1973 RIOTS AND URGED VIGILANCE IN GUARDING DEMOCRACY.

7. BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT A BOTTLE BOMB WAS THROWN BY A GROUP OF VOCATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE REAR OF THE PROCESSION AS IT WAS LEAVING THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY. THERE WAS NO DAMAG, AND THE PERPETRATORS WERE PROBABLY JUST ASSERTING THEMSELVES IN THE USUAL MANNER. NO ONE SEEMED GREATLY UPSET BY THE INCIDENT.

COMMENT: THE OCTOBER 14 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS MARK THE FIRST VISIBLE SUCCESS FOR THE NSCT IN QUITE A WHILE. ON THIS OCCASION THE NSCT EXCELLED IN ORGANIZATION AND CROWD CONTROL. THE STUDENT ACTIVISTS TOOK A RELATIVELY NON-ANTAGONISTIC APPROACH, PERHAPS REMEMBERING THE RANSACKING OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ON AUGUST 20. VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE CELEBRATION MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE POLITICALLY MODERATE TONE OF THE FESTIVITIES.

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